

**Rep. Tom Udall (NM-3)**  
**H.R. 6—Energy Policy Act of 2005**  
**Extension of Remarks**

**April 21, 2005**

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Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to oppose this flawed, shortsighted energy bill, which does not give us a national energy policy, and provides more than \$22 billion in taxpayer dollars to the private industry. I'm not sure what era the authors of this bill think we're living in, but this bill does not reflect our present or future energy needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

High gas prices are on the minds of many Americans right now, and this bill does nothing to change that. The Energy Information Administration has said that this will actually increase gas prices by three cents and will have almost no effect on production, consumption, or prices. I suspect my constituents in New Mexico who are paying \$2.32 a gallon will be concerned about that. But this is only one of the several reasons why I oppose this legislation.

One of my great concerns is the provision that allows drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). I have been to Alaska and I've seen the tremendously diverse wildlife that will be hurt if drilling occurs in the area. In addition, there are native tribes who depend on this wildlife, and they have asked Congress and the state of Alaska to stand up for them and oppose drilling. The environmental costs of this provision are sky-high, and benefits are little to none—six month's supply of oil. Opening ANWR would have no effect on our dependence on foreign oil. It is simply not worth it.

How can the Majority call this bill "comprehensive" when it does nothing to address fuel efficiency in our vehicles? China will produce cars and trucks that are more energy-efficient than the U.S. fleet as soon as 2008. That is why I strongly supported the amendment offered by Rep. Markey of Massachusetts to raise the average of 25 miles per gallon to 33 miles per gallon over the next ten years. Raising fuel economy standards would reap SUV, pickup truck, and minivan owners a net savings of up to two thousand dollars in some cases. It would also alleviate the need for the U.S. to send over \$25 million abroad each hour to pay for foreign oil. This amendment would have truly benefited our national security, our economy, and consumers.

I think my constituents will also be interested in the provision in this bill shielding lawsuits against oil companies who used methyl tertiary-butyl ether (MTBE), which has contaminated 1,861 water systems serving 45 million Americans in 29 states, including New Mexico. Documents from recent court cases reveal that the industry knew MTBE could cause severe harm to groundwater supplies as early as the mid 1980s. Internal Exxon memos from 1985 show the company knew MTBE pollutes groundwater more easily and is more difficult to treat than other gas additives. I find it incredibly disturbing

that some members of this body place the pockets of oil companies ahead of the constituents in their districts whose lives have been adversely affected by this negligence.

Another grave concern that I have is section 631, which is a \$30 million dollar giveaway to a dangerous uranium mining technology that could seriously harm the water and health of 12,000 Navajo Indians. The proposed in-situ leach mining would leach uranium from an aquifer that is the sole source of drinking water for thousands of people in northwestern New Mexico, thereby threatening their health and the integrity of their communities. The proposed mining would leave high levels of uranium in the drinking water supply, which is a slap in the face of Navajo communities that are still struggling to get compensation for the diseases they are suffering from uranium mining conducted near them during the Cold War. This is also unsound fiscal policy for an unproven type of mining. I offered an amendment to strike this section of the bill. Unfortunately, it was defeated by a vote of 225-204. I have been told that these subsidies will not be included in the Senate bill. I hope that remains true, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure that this provision is stripped from the bill in conference.

I brought two other amendments to the Rules Committee that were unfortunately not allowed a vote in the full House. One would create a federal Renewable Portfolio Standard, so that by the year 2022 electric utilities, excluding rural electric cooperatives, would generate 15% of their energy from renewable energy sources, and 20% by the year 2027. This bipartisan amendment was cosponsored by Rep. Mark Udall of Colorado, Rep. Leach of Iowa, and Rep. Platts of Pennsylvania. Right now, the U.S. relies on foreign oil to meet roughly 60 percent of our oil needs. This inevitably leaves us dependent on unfriendly nations and harms our national security. We consume a quarter of the world's oil, yet we only control two percent of its supply. It is high time we invest in renewable energy technologies and develop practical solutions to encourage renewable energy production. It is my hope that the Senate will move forward with a more progressive renewable energy policy in its version of the Energy bill.

My last amendment, which I cosponsored along with Rep. Dingell of Michigan and Rep. Boehlert of New York, was designed to fix unnecessary inequities in the hydropower dam relicensing process proposed in H.R. 6, while still ensuring that the relicensing process proceeds quickly. This amendment applies all new rights given to a license applicant to any other party. All stakeholders – States, Tribes, private landowners, local businesses, fishermen, irrigators, conservationists, water sports enthusiasts, and other concerned citizens – would be given the chance to participate in decisions that affect the health of American rivers. I believe it is only fair to include these stakeholders in the appeals process, and I was disappointed that this amendment was not allowed a vote on the floor.

Why does the Majority insist on passing a bill full of tax incentives and subsidies for the oil and gas industry at a time of record profits for those companies? Even President Bush said last week, "I will tell you with \$55 oil we don't need incentives to oil and gas companies to explore." The massive royalty tax breaks for energy companies are ill conceived. This bill is anti-taxpayer, anti-environmental, and anti-consumer.

We need a comprehensive energy policy that encourages safe domestic energy production, that will not drastically harm the environment and cause potential harm to thousands, and that does not contain billions of dollars in giveaways to big oil and gas companies. We need a real energy strategy that will help consumers, decrease our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, and keep us competitive internationally. I ask my colleagues to join me in voting against this flawed bill, and I hope we can work toward a more comprehensive energy bill in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.